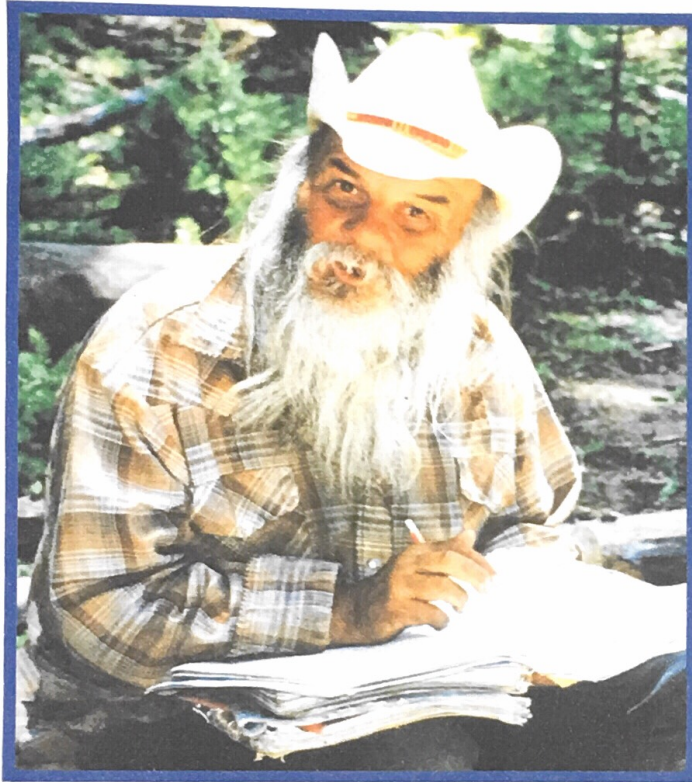




Rainbow Family

Life Stories



by Jodey Bateman.
Interviews with Rainbow
Family of Living Light
folks conducted between
1977 and 2008.

Scanned in 2018.

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08.D SARRA "Dreams and Visions"
- Sarra Sunshine - the Ultimate
Flower Child of the Universe!
— interviewed at the 1982 Idaho
Gathering

SARRA Dreams and Visions

[I first saw Sarra at the Arkansas Gathering in 1975. She and some other women were taking care of a brother who had been bitten by a cottonmouth snake. She told this life story at the Idaho Gathering in 1982. Her story shows how left-wing families in Canada have felt much freer to pass on their traditions to their children than vs left wing families like day sons.]

I was born in Toronto, Canada, in 1949. Our family was really close. My mama and daddy were really simple people with gardens. My family was a strong force in my life. I grew up with gypsy music. My mother was of gypsy blood. Gypsies have always been untrusted because they come through and they're wild and they're free. People who are caught can't trust a free energy.

My father was a tailor by trade and then we had a motel and gas station. So that meant a lot of people coming through. It was a people's space. My father came over from the Ukraine in 1926. It was a fairly large family and they were Bolsheviks. My father's family used to hide the Bolsheviks when they came through the village in the revolution. The Bolshevik who came through his village was a beautiful, strong man and turned my father on with his dreams and visions. I guess my family would have gave me a lot of my dreams and visions.

The people who built railroads in Canada used to paint incredible pictures of Canada to the Ukrainians. It was a scam to get them to come labor. So my father went. There was a group of Ukrainian immigrants, the Association of United Ukrainian-Canadians. They were very Left people. My father was a part of it. During the Depression they used to feed anybody that came at soup lines.

I grew up in the circle of the Ukrainian-Canadian Association. It was more a family. We had a children's camp that I went to from when I was a baby. From before - from when I was in my mama's tummy. The whole camp was built by volunteer labor and sharing. Ukrainian was my native language. At camp we'd talk Ukrainian.

Camp was really neat because it was very involved with the anti-war and civil rights movements. We sang all the songs.

I remember when I was 11 years old having a dream that there was going to be a war and I sat down with Khrushchev and Eisenhower and talked them out of it. I was involved with SNCC Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee when I was 14. I tried to hitch hike to the Selma, Alabama, demonstrations in 1965. Later I tried to collect money for the SNCC movement in Toronto. There are a lot of black people there. Stokely Carmichael came up and spoke to us.

My family were atheists. They were definitely not religious. I was brought up with a real political consciousness. I think my father was a Communist Party member. It was all undercover. My father was really involved in the union movement. When my sister was born, my parents would go for walks with her and give out union leaflets from the baby carriage. When I was 14, I wanted to join the YCL [Young Communist League], but my father said, "Wait until you're 16." I never joined.

I can remember always being a rebel. I got kicked out of school when I was 15 for arguing with my vice-principal about my rights as an individual to question anything and anybody. I got kicked out three times, actually. I was really involved in trying to change the education system and I felt that going to the lake and writing poetry and watching the waves dance was more important for me than mathematics - and that was why I got kicked out.

I've danced all my life, even when I was little at weddings. My father's dream was for me to be a journalist and write for the masses, but he couldn't understand that dancing with children was just as revolutionary.

When I was 13 years old, I knew I was a beatnik. I became involved really strongly in the ban the bomb movement and started hanging out in the Village in Toronto. It was really

similar to Greenwich Village in its essence. It was very bohemian with guitars. Then the Village started going through changes. It changed from the Bohemian to the flower child and the madness. It was a time of pure theater, of dancing in the streets. It was a really magical time. There was so many new people always tripping through. There were lots of American draft dodgers.

In 1967, in the summer, with six brothers and myself, I traveled to California in a 1954 De Soto with no back seat. I had six cents in my pocket. I remember the feeling of California. I was in a Ukrainian dance troupe and I had to get back to dance in the Expo in Montreal. I made it from San Francisco to Toronto hitch hiking in two days. I was already such a free thinker my parents weren't surprised at anything.

Later on that summer I was selling flowers. I made \$6 and three of us hitch hiked back to California and found ourselves at a place called the Free Church in Berkeley. The church was legal aid, medical aid, housing sometimes 60 people a night and a lot of street work with people freaking out on acid.

I started smoking pot when I was 16. I first tried acid in the early summer of '67. But I knew two years before that I was gonna do it. My sister went to New York and did acid in the summer of 1965, and her experiences really inspired me, and I started reading a lot of Leary, a book called The Psychedelic Experience. My first acid trip was very magical. I became a fairy princess and danced all night long. I can remember in the morning watching a flower grow and it just burst with light. I remember going for a bicycle ride and coming back and saying, "I know what freedom is." And then tripping up to the Berkeley Hills...

Berkeley was really a good experience for me because I realized I didn't have to go to a university to do what I wanted to do, which was helping people. At the Free Church, there I was taking care of people and loving. I didn't have to get a PhD

For it. Of course my parents wanted me to go to college. My father never understood when I became religious. He was beaten by the police before the Revolution because he had stolen some grain from the landowner to buy his sister some shoes. He had been cutting wheat and he had the grain in his pant leg. He confessed to the priest and the priest told the police and the police came to the house and beat him and my grandmother. So he was very anti-church.

The first time I was in a church I was 12 years old. And as a teenager I was an agnostic. I guess the words God Is Love was what first made me realize. That, I could understand. My father understood my love of spirit. He was a very beautiful man. He was my daddy.

In 1968 I was just a Village chick living with my first love. We had gone to San Francisco in 1967. In 1969 I went to Woodstock. Woodstock was all my closest visions and they were real. I remember Fantuzzi and Wavy Gravy from that time. It was a time of dancing and laughter and smiles. It was a time of being a child.

In 1970 I went to the Soviet Union, to the Ukraine, to dance with a folk ensemble. And I really got a feeling of the country of my heritage. It was a land of sunflowers and mountain villages. And knowing the songs and the dances, I really understood how beautiful that country is. We did Canadian dances as well as Ukrainian - Indian dances, Eskimo dances and French Canadian dances. And one of the songs the choir did was "Blowing in the Wind."

I found the Soviet Union to be the country who was trying to fuck up as much as the United States. They were losing their culture, the songs, the dance, the dress. The Ukrainian dress is filled with flowers. There are flowers in your hair. And they're starting to wear suits and ties. The girls are

trying to look like suburban housewives. They always wanted to show us the truck farms and the tractor factories. They're really fastened on industrialization. I can remember crying and saying to our guides that I loved the sun and the sky and the flowers and I'm tired of being inside and they understood.

From there I traveled to the Scandinavian countries. Then I lived on Ibiza, an island off the coast of Spain, for seven months and cooked on a wood fire and gathered wood from the mountains and watched the valley of almond blossoms dancing golden at sunset. Ibiza is still my heart song. From Ibiza I went to North Africa, the Sahara Desert. There I became the desert. I traveled to Greece - it's one of the most beautiful countries in the world. I found a village with no roads and a beautiful donkey path and flowers everywhere. And the Greek people are some of the warmest in the world. From Greece I traveled to Afghanistan. I loved the simplicity and space that other people called poverty.

I was on my way to Tibet. And I really wanted to go to the Hunzas. Afghanistan was beautiful, but it was hard for me because the man I loved was into heroin when I got there. I came to understand one of the heaviest forces in the world - heroin really is. That was why we split up after five years together. Heroin is a space where everything's just great, but it's a place where there is no touching. I thought of all the times I had been naturally stoned with my friends and felt the love of touch and caring and realized I would never do heroin after I did it two times. It gave me the gift to be able to help anyone who's strung out.

I came back to Canada for five months and went back to Ibiza for six months. When I came back to North America, I was looking for direction in my life and read Isadora Duncan's autobiography and realized she's my spiritual mother and realized I was just meant to dance. That's my path in life. The summer

after I got back, I heard of the Rainbow Gathering in Wyoming. I hitch hiked up there by myself and met my ever-growing family.

It's our closest dreams and visions and we live the pure essence of sunshine. At the Wyoming Gathering, Barry said, "There is no place for fairy princesses in the Rainbow Family." Four years later I asked him about that and he said, "I never said that."

I remember the fire in Wyoming, waking up hearing folks running up the hill and then the call for fire. We passed the buckets up the hill. We mud-packed all the injured trees and Sonny put a mud cross on my forehead.

Also at Wyoming, I stayed right through for cleanup, which was so fine. We went to a little town called Atlantic City, Wyoming, and bought the Rainbow Rider bus. I traveled on it with Medicine Story and Tisa and Dominic and a lady named Gypsy who does portraits. We hit the bar in Atlantic City with perfect magic. We danced and played music with all the locals. After apple picking, we went to the Sun Dance.

The Sun Dance was incredible because there was a rumor on Wind River Reservation that the Rainbow had started the forest fire at the gathering. A brother had a beaded necklace on. I said, "That's a beautiful necklace."

He said, "My people don't like your people. Go back to your people."

I said, "Bro, do you want me to go back to the madness? We're of the Spirit also."

He walked away and later he came up to me and said, "I heard what you said," and we sat down in the middle of a field and shared dreams and fantasies and he told me the story of his grandmother who was killed at the Sand Creek Massacre.

I think I'm more Indian than white. To me to be Indian is to be in tune with the Spirit of this land and as I grow I become more in tune with the trees and the sky and the essence. To me this is what it is to be Indian. I usually remind them that they're Indians. I'm not so much interested in Indian culture and traditions. I'm more interested in the essence. As we live closer and closer to the spirit of the Indians, we become more and more as they are.

After that we moved into a tipi near Deadwood, Oregon with Flaming Rainbow. I didn't go to the Utah Gathering. I was with Tisa and folks and watched Maggie's baby Wonder born, the first I had ever seen born.

The year of the New Mexico Gathering, 1977, I traveled with Jodie, who became the father of my children, through Mexico and as far as southern Colombia, at which point I lost my passport. In Mexico we lived in a little fishing village. Jodie became a fisherman. We were the only light-eyed people. I was making tortillas and washing our clothes on a rock. The village had no electricity. The waves got really high and the family who built the hut we lived in for us, they lived right on the beach, so they moved in with us.

Then we went into the mountains of Chiapas. We walked the ancient Mayan foot paths for 100 kilometers to villages off the roads. Incredibly friendly people. I saw strong, healthy people who planted the corn. People call it poverty, but I call it beauty. They think living in a bamboo hut with an earth floor is poverty.

With me since then has been a time of having children. I haven't been on the road since I got pregnant. I was waiting for the man I loved, basically celibate, waiting to have a family. It's hard to let go of that dream. The father of my sons and I are not staying together.

(291)

Misha is $2\frac{1}{2}$ and Sasha is four. I really want their father to share them. I love him, but I just can't live with him. Somehow, we're going to have to live together.

I live on an island in British Columbia. The whole island is a community—lots of freaks, really in tune with the local community. I raise almost all my own food. Some day I'll fall in love again, but I'm not ready for a long time.

[Sarra attended the 1984 California Gathering. Afterwards while traveling with Barry and Sunny, she found she was pregnant. She went to Europe to see the father and find out if she would like to be with him.]